



INTERPRETIVE GUIDE

RAY ROBERTS LAKE STATE PARK COMPLEX

ISLE DU BOIS UNIT
JOHNSON BRANCH UNIT
GREENBELT UNIT

With over a quarter of the state's population living in the North Central Texas area, water continues to be a valuable resource. As the population increases, so does the demand for water and land resources. Ray Roberts Lake State Park and the Ray Roberts Lake Public Hunting Grounds provide a haven for the wildlife and plants native to North Central Texas. The biodiversity of the prairie and Cross Timber ecosystems found within the park provide a link to the past and a promise for the future.

To discover more about Ray Roberts Lake State Park:

- ✦ Take a self-guided hike on the Lost Pines Nature Trail at Isle du Bois or the Vanishing Prairie Nature Trail at Johnson Branch. Please stay on the trail to help prevent soil erosion and damage to the prairie grasses.
- ✦ Learn how to fish at one of the park fishing events. If you don't have fishing equipment, ask about the tackle loaner program at the Johnson Branch unit.

Ray Roberts Lake State Park Complex Offices:

Isle du Bois Unit 100 PW 4137 Pilot Point, TX 76258 (940) 686-2148	Johnson Branch Unit 100 PW 4153 Valley View, TX 76272 (940) 637-2294
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www.tpwd.texas.gov/rayrobertslake



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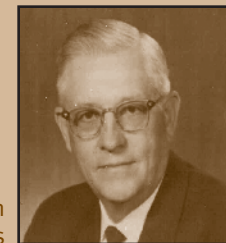
**CRYSTAL BLUE WATERS AND
SCENIC VISTAS ... RAY ROBERTS
LAKE STATE PARK INVITES VISI-
TORS TO EXPLORE THE UNIQUE
NATURAL BEAUTY OF NORTH
CENTRAL TEXAS. A SLIVER OF
EASTERN CROSS TIMBERS HARD-
WOOD FOREST SANDWICHED
BETWEEN BLACKLAND PRAIRIE
TO THE EAST AND THE GRAND
PRAIRIE TO THE WEST RESULTS
IN AN EXCEPTIONAL NATURAL
DIVERSITY OF WILDLIFE AND
PLANT COMMUNITIES WITHIN
THE PARK.**



A variety of outdoor recreational opportunities are accessible from the Isle du Bois unit on the southeast shore, the Johnson Branch unit on the north shore, a greenbelt corridor along the Elm Fork of the Trinity River and five smaller satellite units at Buck Creek, Jordan, Pecan, Sanger and Pond Parks.

Ray Roberts Lake provides water for the growing cities of Dallas and Denton. Originally known as Lake Aubrey, the 29,000-acre reservoir was built by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. The name was changed to honor the accomplishments of Denton's legendary U.S. Congressman Ray Roberts, who represented the area from 1962-1982. Roberts was affectionately known as "Mr. Water" for his leadership and foresight in managing and conserving the water resources of Texas while serving as chairman of the water resources subcommittee. Ray Roberts Lake is the first in a series of reservoirs that capture the waters of the Trinity River watershed, the largest and most highly populated watershed in Texas.

Congressman
Ray Roberts



ROOTS OF DIVERSITY

“A grassland is in many ways an upside-down world . . . Life thrives in an underworld of roots, which are the living heart of grasses and perennial plants.”

Mary Taylor Young,
*Land of Grass and Sky –
A Naturalist's Prairie Journey*

The roots of the biological diversity at Ray Roberts Lake State Park lie in the ecological zones that meet here. The Eastern Cross Timbers run from Kansas through Texas like a river of trees flowing through the vast prairies. Trees typical of the Eastern Cross Timbers are post oaks and blackjack oaks mixed with cedar and winged elms, pecan, hackberry and honey mesquite. The small but hardy woodlands provide shelter and food for a variety of songbirds such as mockingbirds and painted buntings. Small mammals including raccoons, eastern cottontails, eastern fox squirrels, striped skunks and Virginia opossums also make their homes here. Riparian areas along the river and lake edge provide refuge for a variety of ducks, geese and other waterfowl.

The Blackland Prairie to the east is part of the tallgrass prairie that once stretched from Texas all the way to Saskatchewan, Canada. Today, less than four percent of the American tallgrass prairie remains. Agriculture and development have consumed most of the Texas tallgrass prairie. Today, less than 5,000 acres of the historic Texas tallgrass prairie remain. Here at the park you can see little bluestem, big bluestem, switchgrass and Indian-grass, the signature plants of the tallgrass prairie. The bluestems are easily identified by the distinctive waxy blue coating on their

stems. Big bluestem is also known as “turkeyfoot” because of the track-like shape of its seedhead. Although these grasses grow three to six feet in height, the roots of the grasses reach 6-10 feet below the surface. Over two-thirds of the prairie life is hidden underground. The prairie soil acts as a sponge, absorbing precious water and

carrying it underground where it can be absorbed slowly by the extensive root systems of the grasses. Each year vibrant wildflowers emerge, adding splashes of color to the prairie grasslands and providing nectar for insects such as butterflies.

The Grand Prairie to the west is similar to the Blackland Prairie, but flatter and drier. The shallower soils support a shorter, midgrass prairie dominated by little bluestem grasses. Side-oats grama, the state grass of Texas, also thrives here. This prairie is a natural division between the Eastern and Western Cross Timber woodlands. Coyotes, armadillos and roadrunners are at home on this prairie.

ROOTS OF CHANGE

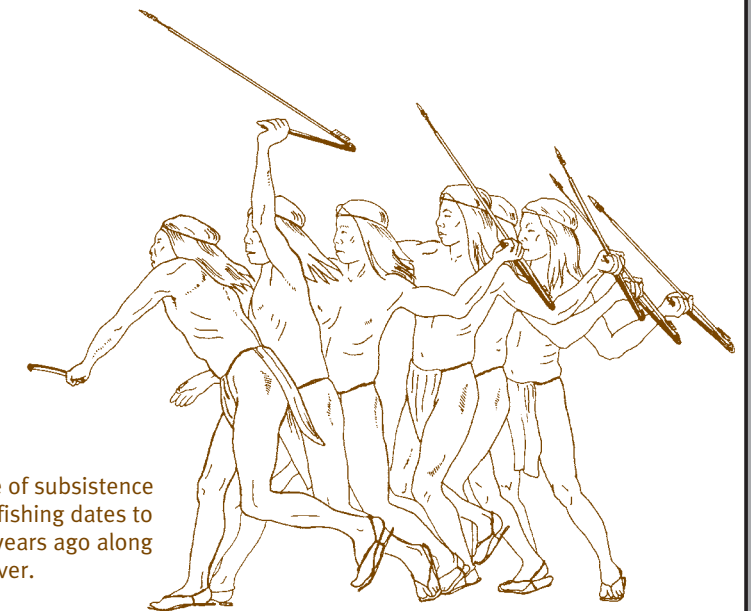
“The tallgrass prairie was a wondrous ecosystem but because of its rich, fertile soil, it drew the lustful gaze of settlers and was the first prairie nation to fall victim to an indomitable foe – the plow.”

Mary Taylor Young,
Land of Grass and Sky – A Naturalist's Prairie Journey

The waters of the Elm Fork of the Trinity River have sustained wildlife and humans since prehistoric times. Evidence of subsistence hunting and fishing dates to over 12,000 years ago when Paleoindian groups camped on the shores of a small lake. They used the atlatl to hunt small mammals as well as bison, antelope and woolly mammoth that once roamed across North Texas. Late Prehistoric peoples (A.D. 700–1700) hunted deer, rabbits and squirrel with bows and arrows, cooking their meat in stone-lined fire pits. They also gathered fruit and nuts that grew along the river.

Between 1500 and 1820, the Spanish and French began exploring what is now North Texas. French explorers named Isle du Bois Creek for the “island of trees” they discovered – what we now recognize as the Eastern Cross Timbers. The Comanche, Kiowa and Tonkawa also frequented the area. Conflicts between these native tribes and new settlers ensued after the Republic of Texas awarded the Texian Land and Immigration Company a land grant to recruit families to settle between Denton and the Red River.

Euro-American settlers from Missouri to Tennessee came to the area in the 1840s, homesteading along the Elm Fork and farming along the edges of the Cross Timbers and prairies. Most of the prairie within the park was farmed by settlers like the Johnson and Jones families who raised cotton, corn and wheat. The Johnson Branch Unit owes its name to the John Johnson family that farmed near Valley View. The Cross Timbers woodlands reminded John Jones and his brothers of their home in Tennessee. You may see remnants of these farmsteads in the park. Drivers herded cattle along the nearby Chisholm Trail from Denton to Gainesville. Today, the prairie around Ray Roberts Lake supports a thriving equestrian industry.



The evidence of subsistence hunting and fishing dates to over 12,000 years ago along the Trinity River.

